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HONORING JUAN RODRIGUEZ AS A DISTINGUISHED LEADER IN CENTRAL FLORIDA FOR PRIDE MONTH

HON. DARREN SOTO
OF FLORIDA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Friday, June 19, 2020

Juan has invested 19 years working in the HIV arena. In 2001, he promised his partner, who was dying from AIDS, that he would devote his life to helping individuals infected with HIV and to eradicating the disease.

In 2016, under the guidance and direction of Dr. Roberto Ortiz, Juan started Bliss CARES, a nonprofit organization in Orlando. The mission of Bliss CARES is to save lives by treating and preventing the spread of HIV, Hepatitis and STD's. They strive to serve every person who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay. Bliss CARES has provided FREE HIV, STD and Hepatitis testing and services to more than 1987 clients and has spent over \$1.8 million on their much-needed medical care.

While leading a caring, and results driven team, Juan has created 5 lifesaving programs for Central Florida. These include:

TRANSformation, a 7-part conversational educational program to assist the Transgender community and sponsors name changes for transgender persons interested in the process.

Sweet Dreams Emergency Housing, an innovative program created to help Transgender individuals have a safe place to sleep that includes services for mental health counseling and substance abuse.

The Bliss Health Insurance Subsidy Program, which grants lifesaving medical care to STD positive individuals without insurance.

The Bridge Program, which provides access to medical care, treatment, mental health, laboratory tests, vaccines, transportation, and grants copay assistance for medications and doctor's visits. The program was designed to provide comprehensive medical care to the uninsured and underinsured populations who have a STD or need preventive care.

Last, but not least, Juan's nonprofit grants free access to the PrEP and PEP-Program, one designed to provide immediate care for all individuals who believe they may have been exposed to the HIV virus. This program prevents HIV from entering the blood stream, thus reducing HIV cases in Central Florida.

HON. DARREN SOTO
MEMBER OF CONGRESS